



Paris, February 1848

Eighteen-Forty-Eight

Lenin spends the first five of the six existing chapters of “The State and Revolution” tracing the development of the thought of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. In Chapter 2 (attached), he sweeps through their accounts of the period of bourgeois revolutions in mid-nineteenth-century Europe that started in 1848.

Marx and Engels had good timing. Engels had witnessed Manchester in the early 1840s in the full bloom of its emergence as the first great industrial-capitalist city of the world. He had also, with Marx, engaged in literary disputes with the Young Hegelians in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany, and other disputes with the anarchists of the time. They had

also corresponded with the Chartists in Britain. They had spent time organising the working class in Paris and in Brussels.



Berlin, March 1848

Then they found themselves on the crest of the extraordinary revolutionary wave of 1848, and so they were well-positioned to record it and to learn its lessons, just as they were with later crucial episodes, notably the Paris Commune of 1871.

In the first line of Chapter 2 Lenin describes “The Poverty of Philosophy” (together with the Communist Manifesto), written in 1847 when Marx was still in his twenties, as “*the first mature works of Marxism.*” The book was written as a polemic against one, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, of several anarchists that Marx had to contend with. These anarchists tested and tempered Marx’s and Engels’ resolve, in hard debate.

Lenin moves on to the Communist Manifesto, where he

immediately derives the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” from the equally direct words of the Marx and Engels in the Manifesto, namely: *“the state, i.e. the proletariat organised as the ruling class”*.

“The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class.”

The proletariat will create a state to suppress the bourgeois class.



Chartist rally, Kennington, London, 1848

Lenin then turns on the reformists. Later, in Chapter 3, Lenin calls the anarchists and the petty-bourgeois opportunists “twin brothers”.

Here in Chapter 2 he writes:

“The petty-bourgeois democrats, those sham socialists who replaced the class struggle by dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion — not as the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become aware of its aims. This petty-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparable from the idea of the state being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the working classes.”

The chapter proceeds to touch “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”. It returns to Marx on the dictatorship of the proletariat, this time in those very terms, in a letter written in 1852; and Lenin says: *“Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [State and Revolution, Chapter 2, The Experience of 1848-1851, Lenin.](#)
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